

THE KOTVAS FAMILY

Missionaries to the Deaf and Hearing—Peru, South America & Beyond

Sending Church: Emmanuel Baptist Church – 1819 Hill Ave. Ft. Myers, FL 33901 – (239) 936-4252 – Pastor Bob Ossewaarde



January – March 2026 Prayer Letter

Dear Friends and Family,

This was a very productive first quarter. I normally update every two months, but it's been very busy. I am reminded of Jesus' admonition in Luke 9:62, "...No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." I have rejoiced in what the Lord did in and through Efata Ministries and our family on a personal level, but I cannot rest on what has been done. We must keep moving forward for the Lord!

Ministry News

In January we had a married couples retreat in Chancay, a couple of hours north of us where we have one of our church plants. It was the first time in several years that we had done this, and it was a spectacular blessing and encouragement to all who came. About 20 couples participated. We had a great time of personal fellowship and teaching.

We held our children's Vacation Bible School program with many children and mothers coming to know the Lord. Then we had camp with 105 Deaf and hearing people of all ages. A team from Efata traveled to assist in two other VBS programs in Peru. We thank God for the opportunities He provides to serve Him.

We co-hosted here at our church in Villa El Salvador our annual Fires of Evangelism, Pastor's School and youth conference. As I mentioned in my last prayer letter, Pastor's School and the youth conference are primarily led by International Baptist Church pastored by missionary Zach Faust. We work together by providing logistics and facilities as well as personnel support for this weeklong conference.



This year we combined the Fires of Evangelism conference normally held at this time with the Pastor's School, which is normally in September. During the conference many were saved, and I was privileged to baptize at least 10 people. Many decisions were made about full-time service. The attendance each night was between 650 and 730 people with many pastors and leaders coming from all over Peru and some other countries in South America.

After the conference Lisa, Jessica and I flew to the States for several personal needs which I will mention in the Family News. I also flew to Chicago during this trip to participate in the Servant's Conference

at First Baptist Church, Hammond, IN, where I taught for six hours on Deaf ministry, culture and some basic sign language. What a blessing this was to encourage the Spanish world to do more in Deaf missions and ministry. I am grateful to Pastor Andy Gomez's vision to reach the Deaf in our Spanish speaking Baptist Churches all over the world.

In addition to my Chicago trip, I traveled to Braselton, GA to attend an acceptance interview at our mission board, Macedonia World Baptist Missions. They were interviewing a new candidate family from our church in Peru – Isaí and Hope Vasquez. Isaí was ordained and sent out of Efata Baptist Church in February this year. He graduated from our Bible College in December and is called to reach unreached people groups and towns in Peru. He and his family were unanimously accepted as missionaries with Macedonia and are now in the States on deputation to raise support for the work to which God has called them.

Our new school year here at Efata started this month. So far, we have already surpassed our number of students from last year. We are waiting for the elections here in Peru this year to try to get a stable Minister of Education that we can deal with regarding our desire to have a high school program for the Deaf like we had several years ago before the government closed all high schools for the Deaf, forcing them into hearing schools with very limited support.

Family News

On the family front, as I mentioned earlier, we flew to the States to take care of different needs. First, I had my yearly medical appointments which went very well. All good on the physical front! (Much different from last year!) In June I need to go back again to see my cardiologist and eye doctor. I also had a follow-up visit with the shoulder doctor with good results there as well.

Also, Jessica turned 18 in February. She needed to take some tests for school and wanted to get her Driver's License from the States, so we got her a learner's permit (not enough time to teach her how to drive; however, she enjoyed the practice and my car is still in one piece!). Thank you for your continued prayers for her health.

While back in the States I was able to visit a couple of new churches and some supporting ones. What a blessing that was.

It is so good to be home and together again.

We never take for granted the love, care, prayers and financial support from you, our faithful friends and family. It is greatly appreciated and much needed.

Blessings,

Joe & Lisa
Joel, Jessica, Jennifer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe & Lisa'.